



Barbados Accreditation Council

GUIDELINES

Programme Approval for Providers of Post-Secondary or Tertiary Education and Training

Mission Statement

To be a high quality provider of registration, accreditation and related services in post-secondary or tertiary education and training in Barbados.

Vision Statement

A coherent system of post-secondary or tertiary education and training which assures excellence and integrity to all its stakeholders.

Core Values

Quality

The Barbados Accreditation Council will have a positive impact on the quality of post-secondary or tertiary education and training by its commitment to high standards that will sustain and advance excellence, efficiency, reliability and competence in higher learning. It will be forward thinking and proactive, responding to trends and changes in the national, regional and international environment.

Integrity

The Barbados Accreditation Council will place fairness, honesty, objectivity, accountability and transparency at the forefront both with regard to its own policies and practices, as well as in the implementation of registration, accreditation and related processes in order to establish integrity as central to educational quality.

Inclusiveness

The Barbados Accreditation Council will be an autonomous regulatory advisory body that will commit to inclusiveness by developing structures and processes that enable participation by a wide range of stakeholders. It will recognise and be responsive to the needs of its clients.

Customer Service

The Barbados Accreditation Council will be a customer friendly service oriented organisation. Its staff will be dynamic, flexible, team oriented, technology oriented, communicative and people centred.

Learning

The Barbados Accreditation Council will seek continuous feedback and insight from its stakeholders and use the collected information to improve its operations and support teamwork, and to provide learning opportunities for its staff and other stakeholders. At the same time, the Council will work with its stakeholders to foster an environment that promotes shared learning.

Quality Statements

Quality for the BAC is the provision of effective and efficient services that are:

- geared towards the enhancement of post-secondary/tertiary education and training;
- fit for purpose, add value and exceed stakeholders' expectations; and
- benchmarked against regional and international standards.

Quality for the BAC is guided by:

- a developmental approach;
- accountability to stakeholders;
- integrity of practise;
- excellence in service; and
- a commitment to national and regional development.

Quality for the BAC is demonstrated by:

- demand for non-mandatory services by its clients;
- respect of peers through mutual recognition;
- positive feedback from internal and external stakeholders; and
- efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness.

The BAC perceives quality in institutions as:

- effective governance;
- clearly stated and appropriate mission;
- efficient and effective administration;
- qualified, competent and engaged faculty and staff;
- timely and customer-friendly services;
- relevant, current, well-documented and appropriately assessed programmes;
- established, documented, functional and well-managed quality assurance system;
- responsiveness to change;
- system for formative and summative evaluation and reform;
- a culture which embraces integrity and ethical conduct;
- prudent financial management;
- effective and diversified learning and teaching experiences;
- adequate and appropriate student services and support; and
- committed and motivated students.

What is Programme Approval?

Programme approval is a quality assurance process which ensures that a programme is appropriately designed and structured; adequately resourced; consistent with the provider's mission; and has stated learning outcomes and assessment strategies that are set at an appropriate level for the qualification awarded.

Benefits of Programme Approval

Programme approval offers many benefits to Providers, including:

- a. Assurance that programmes meets specific standards;
- b. Transferability of qualifications from one provider to another;
- c. National and international recognition of programmes;
- d. Use of the BAC's programme approval logo for the duration of the approval for placement on programme, marketing materials;
- e. Listed on BAC's website together with links to the provider's website;
- f. Recognition on the BAC's Baclight Newsletter which is published biannually and distributed extensively, by post and electronic means, locally and extra-regionally; and
- g. Exposure to BAC's biennial conference audience.

Programme Approval Period

In the first instance, programme approval shall be for six (6) years. Following the initial approval, if the provider applies for programme accreditation and is successful, that programme would not need to undergo further programme approval. However, if the provider fails to apply for programme accreditation or is unsuccessful, the programme will need to undergo another cycle of the approval process. The approval review process must continue until the programme is either accredited or discontinued.

Who conducts programme approval?

Programme approval can be internal or external. Internally, programme approval should be carried out by a committee (either a Programme Approval Committee established for that purpose or a sub-committee of an Academic Board). The programme approval process should take place before a programme is run for the first time. Thereafter, each programme must be monitored and reviewed periodically, usually towards the end of the period of approval or the duration of the programme.

Externally, the Barbados Accreditation Council (BAC) Act, 2004 gives it the responsibility to validate or approve all new programmes of study being offered by providers operating in Barbados. Programme approval by the BAC provides external validation of the ability, in terms of inputs, of the institution to deliver a 'quality' programme.

Is programme approval and programme accreditation the same?

No they are not! Programme approval is one of the requirements for programme accreditation. It evaluates all aspects of an educational programme except actual outcomes such as student performance (actual outcomes is evaluated during the programme accreditation process); feedback from students and teaching staff; and feedback from employers of graduates of the programme. Every programme must be internally approved by a provider before it is subject to external review and approval by the BAC.

Criteria for Programme Approval

Process for sub-baccalaureate, baccalaureate degrees and related qualifications approval

When a provider applies to the BAC for programme approval, it must provide the following supporting documentation:

- Authorisation to offer programme by Governing body or relevant authority
 - Internal programme approval
 - Consistency of the programme with mission of provider
 - Market demand for the programme
 - Availability of resources - human, financial, material to facilitate the programme
 - A detailed programme specification
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- The name of the awarding body/provider for the qualification;
 - The teaching provider (if different);
 - Details of any specialised accreditation by a professional body;
 - Name of the final award;
 - Programme title;
 - Aims of the programme;
 - Programme outcomes – knowledge and understanding; skills and other attributes;
 - Teaching, learning and assessment strategies to enable outcomes to be achieved and demonstrated
 - Programme structure and requirements, levels, modules, credits and awards;
 - Criteria for admission to the programme;
 - Information about assessment regulations e.g. grading scheme, moderation, honours classification;
 - Support that will be provided for student learning; and
 - Date on which the programme specification was written or revised.

With exception of doctoral programmes, the process will comprise:

- a. The submission of details (shown above) on the new programme for initial evaluation by the Council.
- b. The programme approval process may include a two (2) day evaluation visit by an approval team. The team will consist of:
 - One independent Chairperson (appointment to be made by the Council);
 - Two evaluators, local or overseas, from a similar discipline;
 - One senior member of staff from the applying provider, but from a different discipline; and
 - Two representatives from industry, commerce or the local/regional professional body.
- c. In addition, programme approval for doctoral programmes must meet the following outcomes:
 - i. **Resources**: The capacity of the provider to support sustained delivery of the programme, in all delivery modes, with regard to appropriate staffing, teaching, facilities, physical resources and support services;
 - ii. **Research**: The adequacy of provision of research facilities and support of staff involved in research, the level of research activity of staff involved in the programme and of ways by which the research-teaching links are made in the curriculum; and

- iii. Evaluation and Review: Monitoring improvement following evaluation and review, and for determining whether the programme shall continue to be offered.
- d. The evaluation of certificates and diplomas at the post-graduate level may involve the use of a smaller programme approval team.

Post Approval Process

Providers will need to ensure that:

- The course is being implemented and managed as planned and presented at the time of approval;
- Appropriate consideration is given to any recommendations made by the Council. (Providers will need to justify why recommendation (s) are not implemented.)
- Any modifications made to the approved programme are consistent with the intent of and the ongoing development of a quality programme; and
- The Council is made aware of issues affecting the satisfactory provision of the programme.

During the first cycle of a programme, providers will be expected to submit annual programme evaluation reports to the Council. The Council also reserves the right to make announced and unannounced visits to monitor the progress of the programme.

Changes to Programmes Approved by the Council

After programmes have been approved, it is possible that the provider may make changes, some of which would need to be approved by the Council. Below is a summary of changes that must be approved by the Council and those that do not need be approved.

Changes Requiring Internal Approval by Academic Board or Equivalent Body (Provider)

- Changes to individual component descriptors;
- Changes to the credit value of components – whilst retaining the overall credit value of the programme;
- Changes to assessment criteria within components;
- Introduction of new components; and
- Deletion of components.

No Council Approval Required

- Updating of component descriptors and learning outcomes to maintain currency of the qualification with changing context; and
- Updating of reading lists.

Programme Changes Requiring Council Approval

- Change of title;
- Minor changes to the structure of a programme;

- Introduction of a new delivery mode, for example, shift from face-to-face to distance delivery;
- Introduction of mid-programme exit qualification (s);
- Introduction of a new delivery site;
- Changes to regulations concerning entry requirements and cross-crediting arrangements;
- Changes to the level or credits of the programme or its associated qualification (s);
- Changes to the programme outcome statement;
- Significant changes to the structure of the programme; and
- Introduction of a new major.

Programme Changes Requiring Evaluation by an External Team and Approval by the Council (specific for degree and other relevant qualifications)

- Introduction of a new delivery mode;
- Significant changes to the structure of the programme;
- Introduction of a new delivery site; and
- Introduction of a new major.

The provider must inform the Council in writing of all changes to the course approved by the Council.

It is expected that the following information be included in the communication to the Council:

Overview of proposed changes:

- Rationale for the changes
- Internal and external consultation and support for the changes
- Evidence of internal formal approval from the Academic Board or equivalent body
- Details of the changes

Proposed Implications of changes:

- Resources requirements
- Staffing requirements
- Systems requirements
- Regulations amendments, if applicable
- Transition arrangements for students
- Quality management system

What is the process for programme approval?

1. The provider must complete and submit an application form with all relevant documentation to the BAC;
2. BAC will review the application form and supporting documentation and advise the provider on the status of the application;
3. The programme will be reviewed by a team of professionals including independent consultant evaluators contracted by the BAC who have specialist knowledge in the relevant field;
4. The provider will receive a report on the outcome of the evaluation and a statement on the approval or non-approval of the programme;
5. The provider will receive a Certificate of Approval for each programme approved by the BAC;
6. A provider that submits a programme that is granted 'Conditional Approval' by the BAC will be given a period not exceeding one (1) calendar year to correct the deficiencies identified and to re-submit the programme for approval. No additional fees will apply.
7. Re-application and the payment of fees will be required for programmes that are not approved on the expiration of the 1 year period.

Are all post-secondary or tertiary programmes eligible for approval by the BAC?

All programmes that lead to qualifications awarded by a provider(s) or an awarding body operating in Barbados are eligible for programme approval by the BAC. Programmes leading to qualifications awarded by transnational or foreign-based providers, particularly those awarded in collaboration with local providers, may be eligible for recognition by the BAC.

How can a provider apply for programme approval?

Application forms for Programme Approval are available from the BAC or may be downloaded from its website (www.bac.gov.bb).

What are the fees for programme approval?

The programme approval fees are shown below:

Description	Bds\$
Local /Caribbean Single Market (CSM)	
Initial Programme Approval	
Associate Degrees and below	1,000.00
Bachelor Degrees and equivalent	1,500.00
Masters Degrees and equivalent	2,000.00
Doctorates and equivalent	2,500.00
15% Administrative Fee*	
Non-CSM	
Initial Programme Approval	
Associate Degrees and below	3,000.00
Bachelor Degrees and equivalent	4,000.00
Masters Degrees and equivalent	5,000.00
Doctorates and equivalent	6,000.00
15% Administrative Fee*	

When are fees payable?

Programme approval fees are payable on submission of the application to the BAC. Where the approval process includes a visit by an external evaluation team, these fees must be paid to the BAC at least three (3) months before the date of the visit. The provider is responsible for all costs associated with the visit of evaluators, including airfare, hotel accommodation, and professional fees.

Where no external visit is involved, the fees payable to the external evaluators must be paid to the BAC six (6) weeks before the documents are sent for evaluation.

Who Evaluates the Programme?

The programmes are evaluated by evaluators which are sourced by the BAC. To facilitate the programme approval/review processes, the BAC has established fixed fees to be paid to the evaluators. These fees are shown below:

Programme Approval	
Local Programmes	
Description	Daily Cost (BDS) (minimum)
Associate Degrees and Lower	\$600.00
15% Administrative Fee	\$90.00
Total	\$690.00
Bachelor Degree	\$800.00
15% Administrative Fee	\$120.00
Total	\$920.00
Master's Degree/Doctoral/Post-Doctoral	\$1,000.00
15% Administrative Fee	\$150.00
Total	\$1,150.00

Programme Review Model

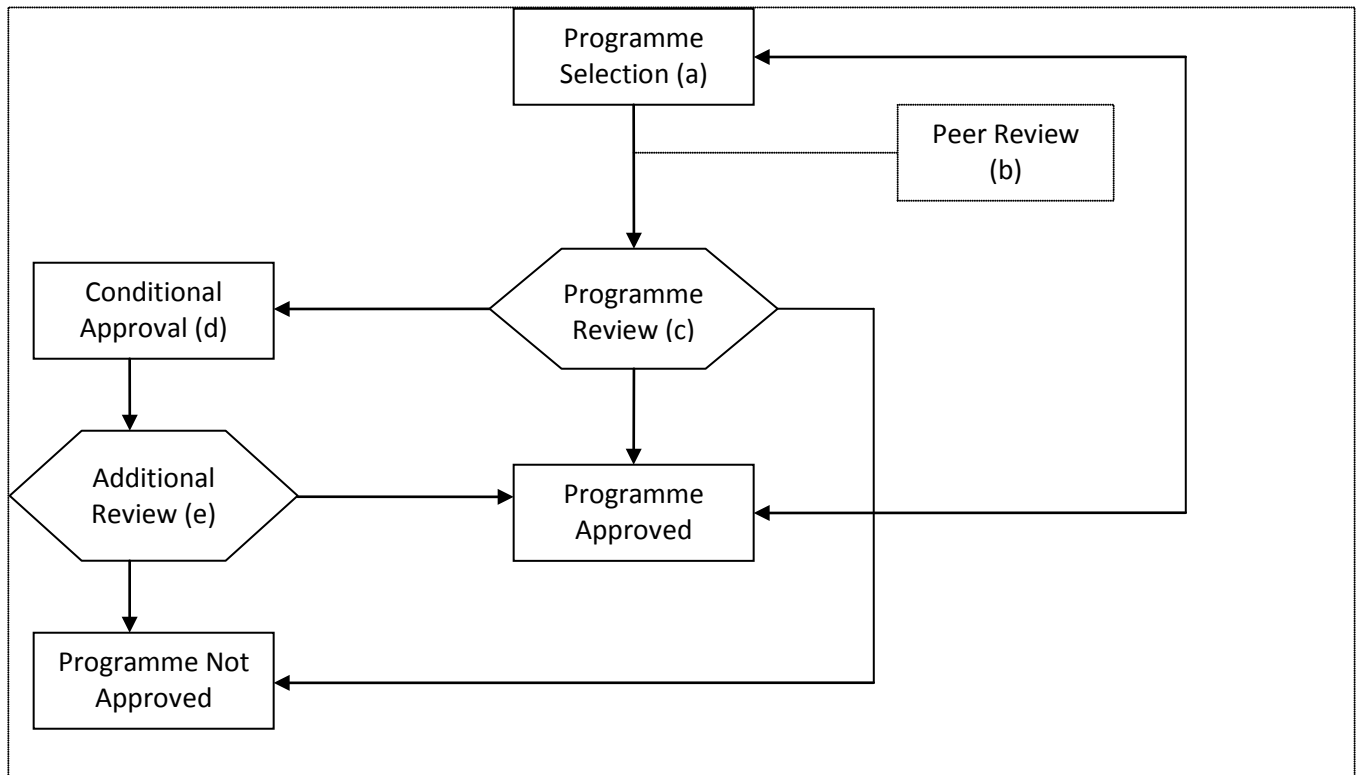
At the end of the initial programme approval period, unless the programme has successfully undergone an evaluation for the purpose of accreditation, the provider will need to re-apply for programme approval and undergo the programme review process.

The programme review will follow similar steps to the initial programme approval process.

Programme Review Period

The period of review is in line with the programme approval which is shown on page 4 under the sub-title '**Programme Approval Period**'.

Programme Review Model



Adapted from the State Agency Academic Programme Review Process Model, USA

Notes

- a. Programmes are selected for review on a cyclical or 'triggered' basis. Cyclical patterns are based on varying recurring time frames. 'Triggered' reviews occur in response to results from external factors, such as complaints.
- b. As programmes are selected the provider will be encouraged to undergo an internal peer review process.
- c. Programme reviews may take a variety of forms. They may include or not include a site visit by an external evaluation team. The evaluation process will be organised by the Council.
- d. Programmes which are approved conditionally are usually given a specific period of time, not exceeding one (1) year to make modifications or correct shortcomings.
- e. At the end of the conditional approval period, programmes may be expected to undergo an additional external review process.

Programme Review Fees

The programme review fees are shown below:

Programme Review	Bds\$
Associate Degrees and below	500.00
Bachelor Degrees and equivalent	750.00
Masters Degrees and equivalent	1,000.00
Doctorates and equivalent	1,250.00
15% Administrative Fee	
Programme Review (Non-CSME)	
Associate Degrees and below	1,500.00
Bachelor Degrees and equivalent	2,000.00
Masters Degrees and equivalent	2,500.00
Doctorates and equivalent	3,000.00
15% Administrative Fee	

When are fees payable?

Programme reviews fees are payable on submission of the re-application to the BAC. Where the review process involves a visit by an external evaluation team, these fees must be paid to the BAC at least three (3) months before the date of the visit. The provider is responsible for all costs associated with the visit of evaluators, including airfare, hotel accommodation, and professional fees.

Where no external visit is involved, the fees payable to the external evaluators must be paid to the BAC six (6) weeks before the documents are sent for evaluation.

Annual Maintenance

What is involved in the annual maintenance process?

Providers will be required to submit an annual evaluative report on the approved programme to the Council as part of the annual maintenance requirements. The report should include, but not be limited to:

- a. Evidence to support that the provider has undertaken annual programme review and evaluation for all approved programmes.
- b. Evidence of recruitment, selection and admissions statistics for the programme;
- c. Assessment and progression statistics;
- d. Qualifications and attritions statistics, to include graduates, non-completions, employment;
- e. External assessment reports;
- f. Outcomes of student feedback;
- g. Reports from students representatives;
- h. Comments on action taken as a consequence of the preceding year's annual programme review and evaluation;
- i. Evaluation of any changes to admissions and associated policies;
- j. Evaluation of any changes to programme in respect of aims; intended learning outcomes; structure and content; assessment policy and methods of assessment; teaching methods and staffing;
- k. Identify programme issues raised by internal quality assurance mechanisms;
- l. Evaluate significant changes to programme regulations and administration;

- m. Evaluate significant changes to arrangements for providing student support;
- n. Evaluate any changes to work experience, employability skills and graduate employment;
- o. Evaluate significant changes to programme arising from external feedback;
- p. Identify any resource issues relating to the quality of programme delivery; and
- q. Identify any future developments which may impact on the quality of the programme delivery.

Providers are required to submit their Annual Programme Maintenance Evaluation for all programme approved by the Council by the anniversary date of the approval.

Upon receipt of the above evaluation report, the Council will consider the report to determine whether:

- i. The programme is maintaining the level of quality at which it was first approved;
- ii. Changes has been made to the programme which would affect the quality of the programme; and/or
- iii. The changes necessitate an external evaluation of the programme.

What are the benefits of annual maintenance?

The submission of annual maintenance reports and the payment of the maintenance fees offer many benefits for Providers which include but are not limited to:

- a. Discounts to BAC Conferences/Workshops;
- b. Ongoing technical support/assistance; and
- c. Free advertising in newsletters and website.

Annual Maintenance Fees

The annual maintenance fees are shown below:

Annual Maintenance	Bds\$
Annual Maintenance¹ (CSME)	400.00
Annual Maintenance² (Non-CSME)	1,000.00

When are fees payable?

Annual maintenance fees are payable on the anniversary of the issuance of the programme approval by the BAC.

¹ Annual maintenance relates to both programme approval and review

² Annual maintenance relates to both programme approval and review

Programme Approval Process

